



Kailo Framework Resources

# Social Determinants



**Social Determinants of Adolescent Mental Health:**  
This document aims to support you in considering the Social Determinants of Mental Health within Kailo.

# What are the social determinants of young people's mental health?

Health, including mental health, is influenced by almost every aspect of our lives. Factors considered as social determinants, such as our jobs, homes, access to education, public transportation, safe green spaces, support from family and friends, experiences of poverty or discrimination all play a role and can significantly impact our overall health and wellbeing. These social determinants can be described as the building blocks of health (Royle-Davies., 2024), as they can play a significant role in shaping our health by establishing strong foundations for wellbeing; they have a greater influence than relying on healthcare services to address issues after they arise.

## Social Determinants and the Local context

Many of these building blocks are tied to the local contexts - places - where we live, learn, work and play. Through considering how these social determinants play out and affect young people in their local context, we can design better policies and practices to help young people thrive. This might be through building grassroots social infrastructure and networks, making policy changes in local institutions, or identifying gaps and strengthening local services and community supports.

- **Example 1:** Families living in higher-crime neighbourhoods may experience a heightened sense of isolation and concerns about safety. These feelings of fear and anxiety can then negatively impact parent-child interactions and relationships, taking a further toll on young people's mental health. Building children's mental health and wellbeing in this context means creating policies that foster community safety and resilience.

## Social Determinants and Local Action

By identifying locally relevant social determinants, communities acknowledge that a wide range of partners have it within their power to improve health within local places. Kailo focusses on local action and aims to support local communities, led by young people, to come together, identify where foundations are challenged within an area, and design strategies to strengthen these.

- **Example 2:** Employment might be improved through a new youth employment service, safety might be improved through community action to support integration of marginalised communities, and local planning policy might prioritise design or preservation of public green space for social purposes. Often a combination of strategies may be used to address challenges and leverage opportunities for a local community.

## Addressing social determinants at multiple levels

Action to address social determinants can occur at many levels (sometimes called socio-ecologic levels). They might target individuals to develop aspects of their own resilience,

buffering against challenging circumstances, or address those challenges directly, be they features of family, community or environmental conditions within which young people live, study or work, and play, or national policies, structures and norms.

- **Example 3:** Money and resources may be addressed by encouraging young people to develop budgetary skills in school PSHE lessons, family and community services promoting existing debt awareness services, while national policy might increase national minimum wages or welfare schemes.

Our [Social Determinants map](#) will provide examples of how social determinants relate to the mental health and wellbeing of young people in more detail.

## System thinking and social determinants

Kailo applies systems thinking to help communities explore how social determinants are interconnected within a place and identify where local actions could have the greatest impact and influence. See [Social Determinants map](#).

Yet knowing just how to do this in local areas is a challenge. This is where Kailo comes in. It provides a structured approach empowering local partnerships to focus on what matters locally, co-design impactful preventative approaches, and embed these into local system and community infrastructures



# Mapping the Social Determinants of Mental Health:

The Kailo team developed a Systems Map to support young people, practitioners, organisations, and system leaders to explore and articulate the dynamic relationships between the social determinants of mental health. This exploration can be furthered through application of the Kailo framework within their local contexts.

[System Map on Social Determinants of Adolescent Mental Health](#)

## What Kailo is not:

Kailo is sharply focused on understanding and addressing the underlying social determinants of young people's mental health and wellbeing. It is not about designing better early intervention or treatment services for young people with emerging or established mental health needs. This is clearly vital, but not the role or focus of Kailo. That said, if Kailo is implemented well and resources are shifted towards prevention, then demand on these early intervention and treatment services may reduce, over time. Ideally Kailo is implemented alongside existing early intervention and treatment service design and system reforms.

**Reference:** Royle-Davies, L. (2024). *Communicating about the Building Blocks of health: Five Practical Tips - FrameWorks UK*. [online] FrameWorks UK. Available at: <https://frameworksuk.org/resources/communicating-about-the-building-blocks-of-health-five-practical-tips/> [Accessed 7 Jan. 2025].

### Other resources on social determinants:

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Dahlgren, G. and Whitehead, M. (1991). *Policies and Strategies to Promote Social Equity in Health Background Document to WHO – Strategy Paper for Europe*. [online] p.11. Available at: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/6472456.pdf>.

Lund, C., Brooke-Sumner, C., Baingana, F., Baron, E.C., Breuer, E., Chandra, P., Haushofer, J., Herrman, H., Jordans, M., Kieling, C., Medina-Mora, M.E., Morgan, E., Omigbodun, O., Tol, W., Patel, V. and Saxena, S. (2018). Social determinants of mental disorders and the Sustainable Development Goals: a systematic review of reviews. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, [online] 5(4), pp.357–369. doi:[https://doi.org/10.1016/s2215-0366\(18\)30060-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/s2215-0366(18)30060-9).

Viner, R.M., Ozer, E.M., Denny, S., Marmot, M., Resnick, M., Fatasi, A. and Currie, C. (2012). Adolescence and the social determinants of health. *The Lancet*, [online] 379(9826), pp.1641–1652. doi:[https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736\(12\)60149-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(12)60149-4).

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